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JAPAN AND KOREA SINCE 1910

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I. INTRODUCTION.

The history of Korea reaches back to a remote period. The Koreans themselves claim a national life extending back to at least two thousand years B. C. So far as we are able to arrive at the facts it appears that in the early period China was the first to give the Koreans elements of civilization, and that the Koreans in turn became the teachers of the Japanese, giving them much knowledge in the way of certain industries and artistic work. "For more than twelve hundred years the Korean civilization continued to be the strong influence in Japan until in the nineteenth century it was replaced by European civilization."¹

The peninsula of Korea reaches out from the province of Manchuria in a southeasterly direction toward Japan. It has an area of nearly ninety thousand square miles and is about as large as New York and Pennsylvania, or a little more than half the size of the Japanese islands. The population is variously given at from fifteen to seventeen millions. The peninsula is long and narrow north and south, which gives quite a range of climate. In the north the winters are rather severe, while in the south the climate is mild and healthful. The soil is naturally rich and under proper cultivation is capable of supporting a much larger population than it has at the present time. Korea's geographical position is such that it formed a sort of link between China and Japan, and for centuries it has been the cause of rivalries and of contests between the two nations. In the last years of the sixteenth century the Japanese raided the country and waged a bitter war. Great brutality was shown in this struggle on the part of the Japanese. The country was laid waste and desolated, and no mercy was shown to Korean victims. This war engendered a hatred for Japanese on the part of the Koreans which still continues. The Koreans called the Japanese "the accursed nation."² "From this war the Japanese brought back so many hundred thousand ears and noses that there is a mound in Kyota, Japan, today where they are buried."³

II. DISCUSSION.

China held a sort of protectorate over the country until February 27, 1876, when Korea's independence was recognized, by a treaty signed by Japan. The ports were opened to Japan's trade

1. Terry, T. Philip, *The Japanese Empire*, p. 717.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 717.

3. Barston and Greenbil, "Korea Asserts Herself," *Asia*, Vol. 19, p. 921.

and a diplomatic minister from Japan was sent to Seoul. In 1883 the United States recognized Korea's independence, and the following year both Great Britain and Germany did likewise. China, however, would not relinquish her claims to the country and sent troops for the alleged purpose of putting down rebellion. Japan also sent soldiers. After the rebellion was put down China offered to withdraw her army, but Japan refused until certain reforms were enacted. This unsettled state of affairs continued between China and Japan until 1894, when the war broke out between the two countries over Korea.⁴

At the close of the war the independence of Korea was recognized by both China and Japan. The latter country, however, did not withdraw her influence, but continued to exercise authority and mastery more than she had ever done.⁵ The Japanese showed a spirit of superiority to the Koreans that was very annoying to them. "If the Japanese continue in their arrogance and rudeness all respect and love due to them will be lost and there will remain hatred and enmity against them."⁶ These were the words of Count Inouye, the new Japanese minister to Korea. He denounced the conduct of the Japanese immigrants who were pouring into the country.

The Queen was a woman of great ability and exercised a strong influence over the King. She was opposed to the aggressive policy of the Japanese. Count Inouye left Korea in September, 1895, and Viscount Miura succeeded him as minister. A plot was hatched by Miura and the Japanese Secretary of Legation, Fukushima Sugimura, and others, to take the Queen's life. The plans were carried out and the Queen was seized and assassinated in the palace not long after Miura became minister. Meanwhile the Russians were becoming active in the Far East and were seeking every means to strengthen their hold on the country in and around Manchuria. After the murder of the Queen the King and Crown Prince escaped from the palace to the Russian Legation, where he exercised authority.

The haughty and domineering attitude of the Japanese in Korea, the murder of the Queen, and the presence of the King at the Russian Legation all tended to give Russia a mighty influence in the country. Nor was she slow to take the best advantage of the opportunity. Contracts were made between Russian officials and the Korean government which gave the former large economic considerations in Korea. Rights were given for Russia to cut vast areas of timber in northern parts. It was generally thought at the opening of the twentieth century that Russia was the great menace

4. *Am. Journ. of International Law*, VI, "Japan and Korea," Editorial, p. 46.

5. *Nation*, Vol 100, "Japan as Colonial Administrator" (Editorial, p. 702).

6. McKenzie, *Korea's Fight for Freedom*, p. 50.

of British India, China, and Japan. Japan sent Prince Ito to St. Petersburg to seek an alliance with Russia. But this being refused, she entered into an agreement with Great Britain, which, while it gave no sanction for any aggressive policies toward China or Korea, did recognize that Japan had special interests in the latter country.⁷

On April 28, 1898, Russia and Japan signed an agreement at Tokyo by which the independence of Korea was recognized, and both nations promised not to interfere in its internal affairs. However, Russia agreed not to interfere with Japan's commercial and industrial activities in Korea.⁸ At this time Russia leased from China the Liaotung Peninsula. After having refused to allow Japan to retain this peninsula after the China-Japanese War it is quite probable that her generosity to Japan in Korea was because of her leasing Liaotung. A little later Russia again became aggressive in the country. This, together with her high-handed conduct in Manchuria, led to the war of 1904 with Japan.

A protocol was signed February 23, 1904, by which Korea agreed that in matters of improvement and administration she would be guided by Japan, and Japan pledged the safety of the royal house of Korea and guaranteed the independence and territorial integrity of Korea. To secure the safety of the royal house Japan was to occupy such places as were of strategical importance. Neither power could make an arrangement with a third power derogative to the protocol without mutual consent. On August 22, 1904, Korea agreed that she would take no independent action relating to foreign relations and finance without consulting Japan.⁹

After the Russo-Japanese war Korea became practically a Japanese province. An agreement was signed April 1, 1905, which gave to Japan the control of the postal, telegraph, and telephone service. In the following November Prince Ito was sent to Korea by Japan as resident-general. Directly after reaching Seoul he sought an interview with the Emperor and presented a series of demands which were drawn in treaty form. They provided that Japan should have entire control of foreign relations of Korea and that her diplomatic ministers should all be recalled from the foreign courts. The administration of the country was to be given into the hands of the resident-general under the Emperor and the Japanese Consuls of the different districts were to be made local governors.¹⁰

The acts gave Japan almost entire control of Korea. We are not to understand, however, that these concessions were made

7. McKenzie, *Korea's Fight for Freedom*, p. 61.

8. *The Am. Jour. of Inter. Law*, Vol. I, Japan and Korea (Editorial, p. 44).

9. *Ibid.*

10. McKenzie, *Korea's Fight for Freedom*, p. 89.

willingly. In October, 1905, the Emperor of Korea appealed directly to the United States Government through Homer B. Hulbert, editor of the *Korean Review*. Mr. Hulbert carried the petition to Washington. On November 25th, Secretary Root sent a message to Mr. Hulbert stating that since the letter had been sent the Emperor had entered into a new arrangement with Japan which disposed of the whole question referred to in the letter, and therefore it seemed unwise to take any action. The day following this statement from Mr. Root, the Emperor cabled Mr. Hulbert as follows: "I declare that the so-called treaty of protectorate recently concluded between Korea and Japan was extorted at the point of the sword and under duress and therefore is null and void. I never consented to it and never will. Transmit to American Government."¹¹ Of course, nothing was done by our government. But from the Korean standpoint the case is especially pathetic because in 1882, at the time the United States recognized the independence of Korea this pledge was given in Article I of the treaty: "If other Powers deal unjustly or oppressively with either government, the other will assert their good offices, on being informed of the case, to bring about an amicable arrangement thus showing their friendly feeling."¹² Mr. Roosevelt later said that by treaty Korea was to remain independent, but that inasmuch as the Koreans could not maintain the treaty other nations could not be expected to do for them what they could not do for themselves.¹³

As resident-general Prince Ito did much for Korea. When he took charge there was a large class of Japanese in the country who may be compared to the Carpet-baggers of the South in the Reconstruction period in our own Government. They preyed upon the natives and were indifferent to law or right. Prince Ito at once dealt harshly with this class. Many of them were sent back to Japan. Practically every writer bears evidence to the work of Prince Ito as calculated to better the Koreans. The people did not respond to his policies but usually resisted.

There were several reasons for this opposition. For centuries the Korean government had been very inefficient. Corruption, bribery, rascality, and incompetency were perhaps its most marked features. It was the aim of the Japanese Government through its resident-general to change these conditions and institute a better system. The Koreans vigorously opposed the change. Those who had been beneficiaries under the old system of graft found their incomes reduced; others who had fattened through the injustice of the old judicial system found themselves without positions; and the

11. McKenzie, *Korea's Fight for Freedom*, p. 100.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

masses of the people were compelled to take a much more rapid stride under the new régime much to their dislike.

Another reason for opposition to the Japanese administration was that the Koreans were compelled to discard long cherished customs. People were not allowed to wear white dress in the winter. Every one must be attired in dark clothes. Every inducement was used to have the natives cut the hair. Those holding public office *must* cut the hair. Naturally there was strong opposition to these regulations.

But perhaps the greatest cause for antagonism to Japanese administration was the old hatred of centuries for the Japanese and the feeling that the people were forcibly brought under a government which had as its goal the assimilation of the people and the stamping out of national feeling.

In July, 1906, the Emperor was practically made a prisoner. He was withdrawn from his friends and surrounded by Japanese. He thought that if he put his case before the nations and showed that he had not given his consent to the protectorate the Powers would render aid. Accordingly three Korean delegates of high standing were secretly sent to the Hague Conference in 1907. But on their arrival they were not allowed a hearing. Directly following this the Emperor was forced to abdicate and his son, who was a man of feeble intellect, was crowned. A new treaty was made with Japan at this juncture which provided that no laws or important measures could be acted upon without the consent of the resident-general. "All officials were to hold their positions at the pleasure of the resident-general, and the Government agreed to appoint any Japanese the resident-general might recommend to any post. Finally, the Government of Korea was to engage no foreigners without the consent of the Japanese head."¹⁴

Prince Ito was killed by a Korean Christian in October, 1909. This act was very detrimental to the people because as has been noted Prince Ito was trying to better conditions in the country. His assassination lost sympathy for the Korean cause on the part of many. But more serious was the reaction it brought about in Japan. Up to this time civil rule had been exercised in the country. The new resident-general, Count Terauchi, was a military man, and he gave the country a much more rigorous government than Prince Ito had done. From the beginning of his administration until the present time military supervision has largely obtained. On August 23, 1910, Korea was formally annexed to Japan, although to all intents and purposes it had been under Japanese control since 1905. The royal family was given peerage and was promised that their income would not be diminished as a result of annexation.

14. McKenzie, *Korea's Fight for Freedom*, p. 124.

It is the opinion of several writers that Japan was compelled to annex Korea in self-defense. We have seen that there had been a rivalry between China and Japan for centuries over this country. With the China-Japanese War in 1894, there was no longer a fear from China. But Russia began to show unmistakable signs that she had designs on Korea. It is altogether probable that had not her aggressions in the Far East been checked in 1904 and 1905 Russia would have soon exerted a large influence in the country. But there was no assurance that Russia's defeat would be permanent. Until the revolution and overthrow of her government in the Great War she was still considered a strong factor in the Far East. Korea was unable to defend herself or take her place as an independent power among the nations. Unprotected, she was a constant menace to Japan because of her close proximity. Her relation to Japan geographically is not unlike that of Ireland to England. Furthermore, her people and religion, together with her nearness to the Island Empire, all offered very plausible arguments for annexation.

We have seen that Japan had been actively engaged in furthering the material conditions in Korea for several years (prior to 1910). Writers generally are agreed that great development has come since Japanese occupation. Under the old government the railroads, highways, telegraphs, schools, law courts, sanitation, and currency were in a deplorable condition. Japan has greatly extended the railroads, and the public highways. One writer states that in traveling through the country the railway stations and towns and villages bear every evidence of thrift. Another states that the people of Korea "are beginning to show a bent toward industry. The increase in the rice crop is 25 per cent a year; wheat and barley, 40 per cent; native cotton, 87 per cent, and upland cotton, 200 per cent. The area of cultivated land is increasing at the rate of 15 per cent a year. Japan is not trying to exploit Korea, but is trying to develop it."¹⁵

Japan has done and is doing much to reforest the country. Many of the mountains are entirely denuded of trees. "In 1812 three millions of pine trees were planted. Now (1912) there are one hundred thirty nurseries of trees and six pine trees are given yearly to each citizen."¹⁶

Japan has introduced a public school system. Under the Korean government there were almost no schools except those conducted by the Christian missions. Prince Ito began the system of public education. There are now common and high schools, commercial, industrial, agricultural and medical schools. The agricultural schools are doing much in preparing the students to become scientific

15. F. H. Smith in *Independent*, Vol. 77, p. 43. "The Resurrection of Korea."

16. David Starr Jordan, in *Rev. of Revs.*, Vol 46, p. 21, "Japan's Task in Korea."

farmers. Under the old system no one had an opportunity to secure an education above reading and writing, except the higher classes. Japan also applied scientific sanitation in Korea. Sewers were built, disease treated scientifically and public health was promoted.

Korea had very poor financial methods. Japan completely overhauled this and established a new monetary system based on the gold standard. In everything that has to do with material prosperity and welfare great improvement has been made under Japan's government.

Three years after Japan took possession of Korea Count Terauli made an official report of his administration in Chosen, as it is now called. A few items from this report are here given. In 1909 the total amount of trade was 52,890,000 odd *yen* (a *yen* is worth 50 cents). In 1911 the trade was 72,940,000 odd *yen*, and in 1913 was 102,450,000 *yen*.¹⁷ The increase in rice production, as given in this report, also shows the work of the Japanese. Between 1908 and 1910 the average annual amount of rice harvested was 8,000,000 *koku*. In 1911, the year after annexation, the crop was 10,070,000 *koku*. The report shows a great stimulus in live stock raising. In 1909 the total number of cattle in Japan was 628,000; in 1912 the number was 1,040,000.¹⁸ Not only has the number of cattle increased, but the quality has been improved.

One writer sums up Japan's work in Korea thus: "Japan has given the Koreans reliable courts, a just financial system and honest weights and measures." Whatever faults and abuses Japan is responsible for, the blessings she is giving Korea, of safe society, of justice, of knowledge, of commerce, of agriculture, of roads, of healthful conditions, are the beginning of a new life for the people. A missionary said; "They dress better, eat better, and do better than ever before, and the government that can bring about these things must be given the credit of having a moral purpose on a large scale."¹⁹

But the natives have not been happy under Japanese rule; and the ill feeling reached a climax in March, 1919, when revolution broke out and they declared themselves independent. Although Japan has conferred great benefits on the people in the ways above mentioned she has been lamentably deficient in some things that are vital to the success of any nation called to rule over a subject people. It has been seen that Korea was given a modern public school system, but it is a requirement of the Japanese Government that the Korean language shall not be taught in the schools. Furthermore,

17. Results of Three Years of Administration in Chosen, p. 19.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

19. Dr. J. H. DeForest, in *Independent*, Vol. 70, p. 13, "The Moral Purpose of Japan in Korea."

the teaching is such as to crush out the knowledge and memory of the history and institutions of Korea and in its place to instill a national patriotism for Japan. The Korean students are encouraged in utilitarian education. The charge is made that the Japanese students in Korea are given superior advantage in the schools, and are offered more advanced courses than the native students are allowed to take. Finally, the Korean student is not allowed to go abroad to study, except to Japan. The people naturally feel that they are discriminated against. Count Terauchi, in his official report, states that the "Greatest stress in the new educational system was laid on common and industrial education, and it was arranged that higher education should gradually be given while great care was taken, at the same time, that the new system should agree with the need of the times and popular conditions."²⁰ While there may be good reason for this course it would seem unwise to make it impossible for the Korean student to avail himself of equal advantages with the Japanese both in the educational courses he may take and in going to foreign countries for study.

Another charge made is that the Japanese exploit the people, especially in getting control of their land. According to one writer the land of Korea is divided into four classes: private, royal, municipal and Buddhist temple lands. The Japanese Government confiscated the land belonging to the royal family, the temples and the municipalities, on the ground that these lands belonged to the State. This real estate was then sold or leased to Japanese farmers, never to Koreans. The Japanese Government has given sanction to the Oriental Colonization Company, whose object is to settle Japanese immigrants in Korea. The Company will pay the passage of the immigrant and secure him a piece of land, with the understanding that he will pay back when he is able.²¹ The same writer is authority for the statement that one-third of the land is already in the hands of Japanese. One method of forcing the Koreans from their farms is for the Japanese to purchase an upper tract of irrigated territory and then having shut off the water from the lower district force the Koreans to sell at a mere nominal price.

Still another grievance is that the people are denied the free use of their money. The wealthy Koreans must have Japanese stewards who have complete control of their business affairs. All expenditures must be scrutinized by this steward, and his sanction secured before purchases can be made.

But perhaps the most serious complaint is that the Japanese do not give the Koreans any voice in government, or if they are allowed governmental positions they are so restricted by Japanese

20. Results of Three Years' Administration in Chosen, p. 52.

21. Henry Chung, in *Asia*, Vol. 19, p. 467, "Korea Today."

officials that they have no power. This charge is refuted by Professor Ladd. He states that of thirteen provinces in the country the governors are Koreans, with the exception of four or five; that all the district magistrates are Koreans, and many of the high officials in the courts of justice.²² Other writers deny that the Koreans have these privileges.²³ Henry Chung says that in order to be sincere and true Japan must either "give the Koreans complete independence, autonomy, or a voice in making and administering their own laws and in selecting the executive and judiciary of the country." A number of writers agree that Japan has shown a spirit of superiority in relation to Korea. The natives are treated as an inferior race, and are given small consideration by the Japanese officials.

The above reasons are some of the most outstanding grievances. But back of all these things is the deep-seated hostility toward Japan and the consciousness of the people that their independence was forcibly taken away, and that the policy of Japan seems to be to root out entirely national consciousness and assimilate the people.

The climax was reached March 1, 1919, when the Koreans began a passive revolution and declared themselves independent of Japan.²⁴ There are three points in this Proclamation worthy of note. They are called the "Three Items of Agreement."

1. "This work of ours is in behalf of truth, religion, and life, undertaken at the request of our people, in order to make known their desire for liberty. Let no violence be done to any one."

2. "Let those who follow us, every man, all the time, every hour, show forth with gladness this same mind."

3. "Let all things be done decently and in order, so that our behavior to the very end may be honourable and upright."

The spirit of these Items of Agreement seems to have dominated the revolutionists at all times. While the movement was quite general throughout the country the people did not show a violent attitude. But the same cannot be said of the Japanese. The officials used a heavy hand everywhere. The utmost severity was shown. Thousands were arrested in Seoul within a few days. Everywhere unspeakable cruelty and brutality were exercised. The Koreans were cut down by the sword, were shot, even flogged and tortured. Women were subjected to the worst of indecencies. These atrocities became the more revolting because the Koreans did not offer violence, but, on the contrary, as we have seen, were forbidden any such course by the Items of Agreement. The Japanese carried their inhuman methods so far that the missionaries and

22. George Trumbull Ladd in *Yale Review*, Vol. I New Series, p. 639, "The Annexation of Korea."

23. McKenzie, *Korea's Fight for Freedom*, p. 198. Henry Chung in *Asia*, Vol. 19, p. 467, "Korea Today."

24. See McKenzie, p. 247, for the Proclamation of Korean Independence.

white people living in Korea raised vigorous protests. Indeed, the civilized world stood amazed.

In offering a measure of defense the Japanese Government states that the outrages were committed without the knowledge or sanction of Japanese officials. While there may be some truth in this statement, it does not relieve Japan of responsibility, by any means.

These violent measures failed to crush the spirit of independence. On April 23, 1919, when the persecutions were at their worst, delegates from the thirteen provinces met in Seoul, organized a republican form of government and elected a president, Dr. Syngman Rhee. Dr. Rhee was in America and set up headquarters in Washington.

III. CONCLUSION.

The world is so busy with wars, peace treaties, and national and international reconstruction that the Korean troubles have been largely overlooked. But, when one makes examination he finds there are great and difficult problems that will require the utmost skill and wisdom in solving.

The question is more significant now than it would have been at an earlier period because of the world importance of the Far East. Each succeeding year emphasizes afresh the fact that the Pacific is destined to be in the near future the great center of the world's activity and thought. Furthermore, Japan seems destined to play a most important part in the world's future movements. Her population, together with the natural increase, compel her to seek homes for her people outside her own kingdom. But at this point strong opposition is met. The United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand—the countries controlled by white people—refuse to receive the Japanese as colonizers. China is already densely populated. Korea and Eastern Siberia offer almost the only outlet to Japan's surplus population, which is increasing at the rate of 800,000 a year. Korea, as has been seen, lies in such geographical relation to Japan that it easily comes within the natural boundaries of her kingdom. Practically all writers are agreed that the government had become so inefficient that it could not hope to maintain its independence against the world powers. If, then, Korea must be taken under control by a stronger power, clearly there were good arguments why Japan should have the first right. Her geographical position, her own safety against another nation's seizing the territory, racial affinities between the two peoples, and religious and social instincts—all combine in the interests of Japan's domination of Korea.

We have seen the opposition on the part of Korea to Japan's

taking her territory. But is there hope that this opposition may be overcome? It is the belief of different writers who are in a position to know that it may in time. But it seems clear that so far Japan has not taken the right course to win the loyalty of Korea. Instead of allowing the people their own language and traditions she seems bent on crushing out all national tendencies. Instead of placing the Koreans on an equality with the Japanese and giving some measure of local government she treats them as inferiors and shuts them out from positions of trust and honor in the government. She has ruled them largely by military rather than civil regulations, and now the crowning act of folly has been committed in the brutality with which the revolutionists have been treated.

The history of colonization for the past four hundred years proves that tyrannical methods in dealing with subject peoples fail. Spain, Portugal, and Holland tried these methods, but they did not succeed. The policy of England in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,—a policy of giving the colonies entire self-government and every right that belongs to her subjects at home,—has proven to the world the wisdom of her course. Will Japan be wise and learn the lesson? Premier Hara has promised to substitute civil for military government in Korea, and to bring in other reforms. Will the pledge be kept?